



# Week1 Lesson 2

START NOW

7 steps to stop emotional eating



# 7 steps to stop emotional eating

## Step 1. Physical or emotional hunger

Before you start eating ask yourself: Am I really hungry? Physically hungry?

To help decide, I included this list to be able to distinguish between physical and emotional hunger.

- If you are physically hungry eat a nutritious meal.
- If you are emotionally hungry continue with the following 5 steps.

### DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EMOTIONAL & PHYSICAL HUNGER

#### EMOTIONAL HUNGER

- Strikes suddenly
- Urgent & overwhelming
- Craving for specific comfort foods
- It's a craving we can't get out of our head
- It isn't over when the stomach is full
- Eating triggers negative emotions (guilt, powerlessness, shame)

#### PHYSICAL HUNGER

- Becomes stronger gradually
- It can wait
- Anything sounds good, including healthy foods
- Felt in the stomach (growling, pang)
- Stops when the stomach is full
- Eating is satisfying, positive emotions



## Step 2. Distance

If possible, step away from the food for a few minutes.

If you are in the kitchen, go to another room.

If you are in a restaurant, and you are full but can't stop eating, go to the bathroom.



## Step 3. Delay

- Set your timer for 10-20 minutes and don't eat during that time. If you still want to eat after 10-20 minutes, you can, no problem at all. But during this time follow the next steps.
- If you are in the middle of a binge eating episode, try to slow down. Taking a big breath between bites can help.
- You might not be able to stop eating, and that's okay. How much you eat isn't as important as getting back into a more mindful state instead of the unconscious, mindless eating state.



# Step 4. Dissociate – self-assessment

## Identify your feelings and let them be

Don't eat, just let the feelings bubble up and observe them. Identify and welcome them (Hello anxiety again, long time no see), expect it. Breathe into it.

Tell yourself: I'm just having a perfectly normal human experience, it's totally fine that I don't feel good today, that I don't feel happy, that I'm angry, heart-broken, embarrassed, lonely .... today.

Nothing bad can happen to me, this feeling will go away as all the other feelings always went away. I don't need to do anything to make it go away.

Stay with the feeling, it really can't hurt you and just let it wash over you. If you start to resist it, fight with it or try to deny it, it will persist. "What you resist persist." Carl Jung

**What is the worst thing that can happen if you let yourself feel your feeling?**



# Step 4. Dissociate – self-assessment

## Letting your thoughts go and get back to the “clear blue sky” state

Take a few deep breaths to slow down your racing mind.

To get back to your intelligent, thinking, conscious state say your thoughts out loud and add to the beginning: “My revved up brain is telling me.....

You can also call this part of your brain the lower brain, primitive brain, or survival brain.

Some call it the lizard or reptilian brain. Call it whatever you like.

For example:

- My revved up brain is telling me to eat because I deserve it, I had a bad day.
- My revved-up brain is telling me that one more slice of cake won't do any harm.
- My revved-up brain is telling me that I will eat less tomorrow.
- My revved-up brain is telling me that I will exercise more tomorrow.
- My revved-up brain is asking me if I want to really walk away from this nice food?
- My revved-up brain wants me to admit that I really want to eat.

And so on.



# Step 4. Dissociate – self-assessment

## Back to awareness

This is Awareness. Now you realize what's happening, who's voice is that in your head. Congratulations!

Now you can just wait and let these thoughts leave you and get replaced with different thoughts. Just let them go. They don't serve you.

However, these thoughts may be deceiving and you might not be able to tell yet that these thoughts are not true, they are not worth paying attention to. You feel tempted to believe them and act on them.

If you feel this way, the next step is to stop and think about what's going on. Now you can decide whether these thoughts are true or not, whether you truly need more food, or whether eating/binging will make you feel even worse than the urge feels. Will eating lead to happiness, self-pride, and self-respect, or self-criticism, a feeling of failure, and low self-esteem?

Now you are in the conscious state of decision making.



## Step 4. Dissociate – self-assessment

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What am I emotionally hungry for? (Maybe you just want to relax, rest, or you want excitement, or love, or pleasure, etc.) Think about it.
- What is the outcome of overeating? How am I going to feel physically and emotionally after eating? How about the next morning?
- Is it going to take me closer to my goals or not?
- Is it going to nourish me?
- Who do I want to be in this situation (my old self or my future self)?



*When you simply react to a trigger as you used to do, you are behaving like you have done in your past and you will create more of your past.*

*When you respond to the trigger as the future you, who you want to be, you deliberately create your future.*



## Step 4. Dissociate

**Dissociate** – look at yourself from the outside as if you were another person, preferably a person who loves or cares for you. “Get out of your body”, look at your body eating and ask the following questions:

- What is this woman (you) doing?
- Why is she doing that?
- What else could she do?



## Step 5. Distract

- Think of things you could do instead of eating.
- This could be anything else that isn't eating: talk with someone, walk around the block, do a few jumping jacks, clean the kitchen, drink something, chew a chewing gum, pick up a book, anything.
- Find one that is going to work now.



## Step 6. Decide

Decide whether or not you are going to eat. If you managed to find something to distract yourself with and you don't want to eat, that's great.

If you still want to eat, that's totally fine too. Don't worry, over time you will decide more and more often not to eat.

Be patient with yourself. Don't beat yourself up if you decided to eat, it's ok. Instead, enjoy the meal you decided to eat thoroughly.

If you can, try to eat slowly, mindfully, and enjoy, really savor every single bite. Try not to stuff yourself mindlessly. Taste the food and when you don't find it enjoyable anymore, stop eating it.

It's fine if you can't do it right now and you eat mindlessly to feel better.

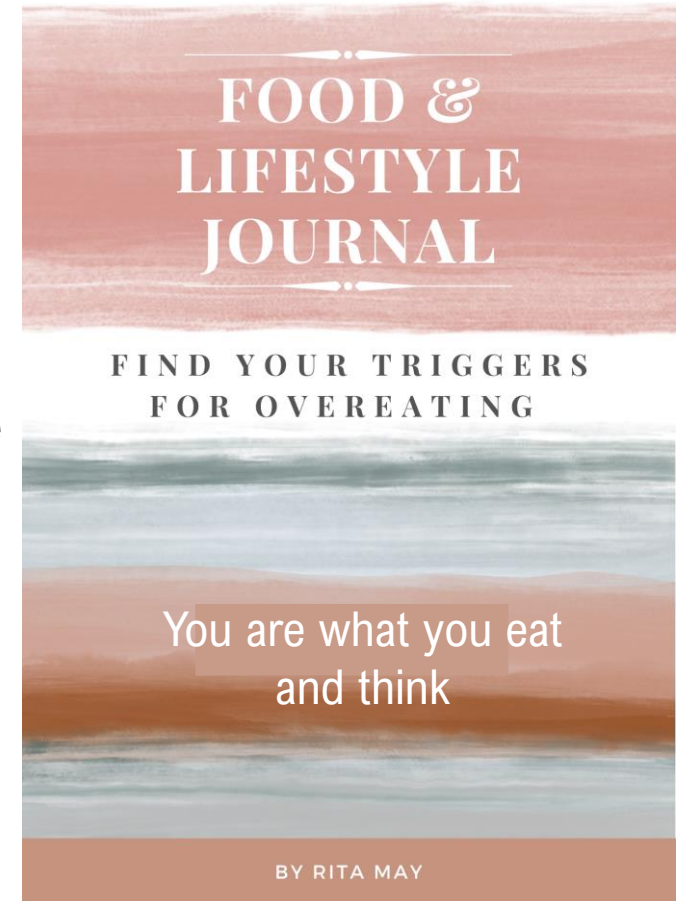


## Step 7. Planning for future

When you are calm and have no urges to overeat, sit down, and prepare yourself for future episodes. This way you will have a set of tools that you can use to stop yourself before you binge. At the moment eating is the only tool in your toolbox.

Use the **Self-Awareness Worksheets** and the **Food and Lifestyle Journal** or **Weight Loss Journal** to identify your overeating habit, find your triggers and reasons for overeating and think about how you could disrupt these patterns.

In the Journal you can track your food, sleep, feelings, hunger signals, and many more things that will all help you identify the reasons for emotional eating.



# Step 7. Planning for future

Be aware that you might have some hidden benefits of emotional eating that you haven't thought of.

- We usually use eating to suppress uncomfortable feelings with food (others may use alcohol, drugs, shopping, social media, gambling, etc.). We distract ourselves with the action of eating. Eating calms you down, makes you feel good temporarily, helps you switch off and not think about your problem and not feel the feelings that you are trying to avoid.
- But as a hidden “benefit”, after overeating you can also obsess about why you overate, how disgusting you feel, why you are such a failure, and how you are going to compensate for this overeating (planning your next restriction phase). This keeps you busy for a while so you don't have to deal with your real feelings and problems that you would actually need to process.
- You might have a difficult life situation (relationship, career, financial, etc.) that you know that you should address, but you don't. Why? Because at some level you believe taking action now would be more painful than just putting it off. So you start to obsess about your weight, how your body looks, hating on it, and going on crazy fad diets and torturing it with overexercising. This keeps your mind busy, so you don't need to concentrate on your real-life problems (your unhappy relationship or your unbearable boss). It's a distraction. And if the uncomfortable feelings bubble up sometimes you suppress them with eating.



# Step 7. Planning for future

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- Think about your life in 5 years from now if you don't change your eating habits, mindset, beliefs and attitude. What is it going to be like?
- What could it be like if you decided to change and committed to it 100%? How would it impact your physical appearance, your personal life, social life, intimate life, financial life, career?
- Which one do you prefer?



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